

SUMMARY OF THE PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING AUGUST 3, 1999

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, August 3, 1999, at 3 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to review the outcome of the PT meeting at the Fifth NELAC Annual Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY, and to outline tasks to be completed for the next interim meeting.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Burmeister began the conference call by introducing herself, as the new committee chair, and each of the committee members. She welcomed the two new committee members: Ms. RaeAnn Haynes, from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and Mr. Larry Jackson, from Environmental Quality Management (in New Hampshire).

REVIEW OF PT COMMITTEE MEETING AT NELAC V

Ms. Burmeister reviewed some of the outstanding or related issues from the PT Committee's meeting at NELAC V. Each of these is discussed below.

Section 2.0 (Interpretive guidelines and list of ANSI/RAB-accredited providers for NELAC AAs)

The interim standards for the proficiency testing program (Section 2.0) were revised at NELAC V. The revised section included language to describe what happens for programs and compounds for which NIST/NVLAP accreditation is not available. Section 2.0 describes a new option for accreditation by an American National Standards Institute/Registrar Accreditation Board (ANSI/RAB)-accredited registrar or equivalent Proficiency Test Provider Accreditor (PTPA). If neither are available, then Section 2 says that Primary Accrediting Authorities may choose to accept PT results from non-accredited PT Providers.

Because this language is new, and the list of accreditors under the new provision is not well defined, the Board of Directors decided to develop some interpretive guidelines to help the new NELAP Accrediting Authorities. A list of ANSI/RAB-accredited providers will also be put together and distributed to them. They are due to be completed by August 13, 1999. Ms. Anne Rhyne, who is now the PT Committee's liaison to the Board of Directors, will draft the interpretive guidelines and send them to the committee for review before they are made final. It was noted that the website for the American National Standards Institute may be helpful (the URL is "www ansi.org" or "www rabnet.com").

Effective Date of PT Sample Results

To meet the NELAC requirements, the NELAC Transition Committee and the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) had previously recommended that PT sample results dating back to January 1, 1999 be accepted. After further discussions, this issue is being referred to the group of Accrediting Authorities, and it will decide on the effective date for PT sample results.

Action Items from Annual Meeting

There was one action item to be resolved from the PT Committee's meeting at NELAC V. The issue was whether Chapter 2 has the authority to establish requirements for another chapter. Specifically, Section 2.7.5, which establishes a mandatory time line of 60 days for the Accrediting Authority to take action to determine the accreditation status in the case of a second failed PT study. Ms. Anne Rhyne, previous chair of the PT Committee, spoke to Ms. Marge Provost, previous chair of the Accrediting Authority Committee (Chapter 4), to discuss the issue. They agreed that it is in the authority of Chapter 2 to refer to Chapter 4, and to set the 60 day time line. No changes are recommended for Section 2.7.5.

Definition of "Assigned Value"

Recent changes to Chapter 2 included the change of terminology from "prepared value" to "assigned value." It was pointed out that the definition of "assigned value" needed to be defined and included in the NELAC glossary. One committee member said that the NIST Handbook 150-19 (p. 3) contains a definition for the term. Mr. Matt Caruso agreed to follow-up on this task.

Conflict of Interest Issue

During the PT Committee's meeting at NELAC V, Mr. Larry Jackson had asked whether it is considered a conflict of interest for an accrediting authority to produce and authorize its own PT samples. After some discussion, Mr Jackson withdrew his request that the committee take action at the present time. He said that as a new committee member, he would like to become more informed, and may make recommendations regarding this issue in the future.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS/CHAIRS MEETING BY TELECONFERENCE SUMMARY

Ms. Burmeister provided the committee with a summary of the recent Board of Directors/Chairs meeting by teleconference. She noted that the Quality Systems standards (Ch. 5) was not yet on the NELAC Website, but would be soon. Each of the chapters was posted one at the time but since this has caused some confusion, in the future, they may all be posted at once.

COMMITTEE TASKS FROM NOW UNTIL NELAC V INTERIM MEETING

Ms. Burmeister listed some of the tasks which require attention before the next interim meeting:

Regression Equations

Acceptance criteria need to be developed for analytes outside the scope of WP (water pollution) and for solid waste analytes. In order to develop the regression equations, experimentally-derived, historical data sets are needed. Mr. Caruso said that the data from NY State and other PT Providers could be used for this purpose. Mr. Jackson also suggested EPA's Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) database. He said that the committee could compare the two data sets and if there was a good correlation, then they could develop the acceptance limits using both data sets. Mr. Jackson offered to try to contact someone to see if access to the CLP database was possible.

The Solid Waste Subcommittee had previously consisted of Mr. Tom Coyner, Mr. Caruso, and Mr. Chuck Wibby. Since Mr. Coyner is no longer on the PT Committee, Ms. Burmeister asked Mr. Jackson to join the subcommittee. She also asked Mr. Caruso to chair the subcommittee. Both agreed. Ms. Burmeister then asked the subcommittee to decide upon a timeline for accomplishing these tasks.

Update Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Ms. Burmeister said that due to changes in the standards, one of the FAQs is incorrect. She will correct the FAQ and then submit it for posting on the NELAC Website.

Appendix B

Because the title of Section B.1.2 was modified to specify that it was for water matrices, the appendix no longer accounts for other matrices (such as solid and hazardous waste). Ms. Burmeister asked Mr. Caruso to write up a comment to help address this situation at later date.

Appendix F

Dr. Faust Parker said that some of the wording in Appendix F needed to be revised. Also, he pointed out that the wording in other chapters needed to be revised regarding whole effluent toxicity (WET). Ms. Burmeister suggested that he provide written comments to each of the chapters affected, since this makes it easiest for the committee to address the problem.

Appendix G

Mr. Wibby said that he has received no new comments on the radiochemistry appendix.

Review New Comments

Three new sets of comments have been distributed to the committee from: 1) George Avery, AR; 2) Bob Rucinski, RT Corporation, WY; and 3) Michelle Kropilak, NJ. The comment from Ms. Kropilak was discussed by the committee during this conference call.

Ms. Kropilak said that Sections C.1.1.3 and C.4.1 both seem to address the same thing in a slightly different way. She asked whether these sections could be combined to clarify the meaning. Mr. Caruso explained that Section C.4.1 was written to supplement Section C.1.1.3. He said that Section C.1.1.3 allows the committee to use data from wherever they can find it. Section C.4.1 provides another avenue for a State to add a particular analyte, and lists the items that the committee would like to see in order to approve such an addition. (Another way for a State to add an analyte is to provide written request to the PT Committee that they add an analyte.) The consensus of the committee was not to make any changes at this time.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE FOR NELAC VI

Usually, at the national meetings, two meeting sessions are scheduled for the PT Committee. At the last annual meeting, the On-site Committee's session was not long enough. Ms. Burmeister asked the committee whether they could give up one of their sessions. A committee member responded that it depends on the number of comments received before the interim meeting. As it stands now, one session seems sufficient. Ms. Burmeister then replied that for now, the committee will have only one session scheduled.

The PT Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 15, 1999, from 1 to 5 p.m.

EPA/NIST/EMMC ITEMS

A representative from NIST was not available to provide a status report on the NIST accreditation of PT Providers.

OTHER ITEMS OR ISSUES

Ms. RaeAnn Haynes asked whether there was any re-addressing of interdependent tests (for suites of organic compounds). The committee explained that accreditation is currently done on an analyte-by-analyte basis, therefore, PTs are handled in the same manner.

The next meeting by teleconference for the PT Committee will be on August 24, 1999, from 1 to 3 p.m. EDT.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 3, 1999

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Matt Caruso will develop definition for “assigned value,” which will then be added to the NELAC glossary.	
2.	Mr. Larry Jackson will try to contact someone at EPA to gain access to the Contract Laboratory Program (CLP) database.	
3.	The Solid Waste Subcommittee will develop timelines for the development of regression equations for analytes outside the scope of WP and for solid waste analytes.	
4.	Ms. Barbara Burmeister will update the PT Committees FAQs.	

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 3, 1999**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 833 - 1770 F: (608) 833 - 2803 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Autry, Lara (absent)	USEPA/OAQPS	T: (919) 541 - 5544 F: (919) 541 - 1039 E: autry.lara@epamail.epa.gov
Caruso, Matthew	NY State Dept. of Health	T: (518) 485 - 5570 F: (518) 485 - 5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Haynes, RaeAnn	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry	Environmental Quality Management, NH	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
Kropilak, Michele	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection	T: (609) 984 - 7732 F: (609) 777 - 1774 E: Mkropilak@dep.state.nj.us
Nettrour, Cindy	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618) 239 - 0516 F: (618) 235 - 6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Parker, Faust	Espy, Houston & Assoc, Biomonitoring Lab	T: (713) 977 - 1500 F: (713) 977 - 9233 E: fausteha@wt.net
Raiford, Darlene (absent)	HRSD - Central Environmental Lab	T: (757) 460 - 4217 F: (757) 460 - 6586 E: draiford@hrsd.dst.va.us
Rhyne, Anne Board Liaison (absent)	TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm.	T: (512) 239 - 1291 F: (512) 239 - 2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Wibby, Chuck	Environmental Resources Association	T: (303) 431 - 8454 F: (303) 421 - 0159 E: qcstds@aol.com
Lloyd, Jenny (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-5942 F: (919) 541-5929 E: jml@rti.org

